EPISCOPAL MAINE

Bishop Thomas James Brown, Tenth Bishop of Maine
Visitation Customary

Why does the Bishop Visit?

Because the bishop is the chief priest and pastor; it's both his responsibility and privilege to be with you and your faith community no fewer than every 36 months. In addition to visitations, he happily accepts invitations for a variety of occasions: to share in the joys and sorrows of the community, to offer pastoral care during crisis, to join you during times of leadership transition, and to celebrate anniversaries and special liturgies. What follows describes the various parts of an episcopal visitation:

Worship

When Bishop Brown joins you for an episcopal visitation he will preside and preach at the Holy Eucharist. He trusts the liturgical decision-making of clergy and communities and promises to have a conversation with you if he has questions or concerns.

Conversation

The bishop hopes that conversations will be abundant symbols of every episcopal visitation. He's eager to hear from and talk to the primary leaders of the congregation (usually this is the rector, vicar, or priest-in-charge), the vestry or the bishop's committee, and with parishioners. The conversations can take whatever form you think best. He wants to hear from the congregation their stories of faith, as well as to listen to descriptions about what's currently sparking joy, or fueling anxiety including what's challenging, and to offer support and that of the diocesan staff. Questions about the Diocese of Maine or the Episcopal Church are welcomed. In turn, you can expect him to elicit stories about the relationship between the clergy and the congregation. In the ministry settings where a clergy person is receiving compensation, hearing about the details of the compensation, and if necessary, in advocating for the support of clergy and their families, is always good.

Records of the Church

Please have the official records of the church ready for the bishop. The Record of Services, the Parish Register, and Safe Church Certificates and a list of those who hold lay licenses in the congregation (name and ministry) should be ready for me to see; the bishop will sign and date the back cover of the official records.

Making Plans

- It's a lot of extra work to have an episcopal visitation. An Episcopal Visitation generates and requires a lot of energy! At the same time, it can be a time for connection and celebration. All shall be well!

- Please keep your regular worship schedule; don't combine services before talking to the bishop. Bishop Brown is always happy to preach and preside at all the weekend worship services.

- Please think about the planning process to be about a two week project. The actual tasks are relatively easy to accomplish, but the development of a worship leaflet, and any conversations between us will require more lead time than that of a typical Sunday. We have included a Visitation Worksheet. Please email it to Bishop Brown at tbrown@episcopalmaine.org; at least two weeks before the episcopal visitation. Changes are expected; just let Bishop Brown know.

- In the planning process please feel free to email or call with questions or concerns.

- On the Thursday or Friday before the episcopal visitation, we can have a short conversation if it's helpful to make sure everything is ready.

Liturgical Guidelines

- The Episcopal Church authorizes the Revised Common Lectionary. Unless the Sunday falls on a day when a Feast of our Lord can be transferred, please keep the propers for the Lord's Day.

- Be creative! There are many Anglican resources available to use. However, please make sure that anything not from the Book of Common Prayer or The Hymnal 1982 is noted. It's

helpful to Bishop Brown to have a heads-up if the texts or music are unfamiliar to your congregation; sometimes he will make brief catechetical remarks.

➢ Special observances: feel free to craft the liturgy to integrate anniversaries, and blessings of new space or furnishings. There is one caution to this invitation: please make sure the liturgy doesn't become what the bishop calls, "liturgy by the yard." Sometimes more is more, and sometimes less is more; use your judgment and wisdom.

➢ You may choose to use the Nicene Creed, or the Renewal of Baptismal Promises (BCP p. 292). If we renew baptismal promises, the bishop prefers to do this at the font, and to join the rector or priest in charge in sprinkling the congregation with the water of baptism. If moving to the font is awkward, or complicates matters, please plan things in whatever way makes best liturgical sense.

➢ Vestments: Bishop Brown is happy to wear the parish's vestments, or to bring his own. The white, green, and red sets have a cope and a deacon's stole. Deacons should plan to wear the matching stole. When he wears a cope, the bishop will put the chasuble on at the offertory.

➢ Liturgical color: White is generally used for Baptisms. Either white or red may be used for Confirmations, Receptions, or Reaffirmations. Please indicate your choice on the planning sheet.

➢ Whenever possible the bishop prefers to pray with the choir, acolytes, and clergy before the entrance procession.

➢ Sermon: the bishop preaches on the appointed texts for the day or the occasion.

➢ The Lord's Prayer: choose the version that makes most sense in your context.

➢ When desired, the Pontifical Blessing may be used at the conclusion of the liturgy (BCP p 523) beginning at "Our help is in the Name of the Lord." Music for the blessing, when it is sung, is to be found in the Hymnal (S-173). When the Pontifical Blessing is used, it is important that the versicles and responses by readily available to the people and the choir.

Other ministers:

Deacons, Priests, and Lay People—please model all orders of ministry, as well as our collegiality. If there is sufficient space, the bishop prefers to have all four represented behind the altar: the bishop, the rector or priest in charge, the deacon, and a lay person.

Priests At the Great Thanksgiving, it is appropriate that the priests of the community stand with the bishop at the altar. The practice of other presbyters sharing in the manual acts (so-called "concelebration") is problematic in most Anglican contexts; further, because of our ongoing emphasis on the ministry of the baptized, these added gestures can send an unintended sign of clericalism. Please refrain from doing this.

Deacons A deacon will elevate the chalice at the words of invitation. Deacons may go to the bishop for a "sending prayer" before proclaiming the gospel, or not. There are good reasons for doing so, and equally good reasons for not doing so. If the congregation has a deacon, the deacon will serve in his or her customary roles in the liturgy. If the congregation does not have a deacon, the bishop may bring a deacon to serve with him. The visiting deacon will perform the usual diaconal functions. The visiting deacon will also be available after the service to speak with individuals who are interested in the diaconate, as well as the discernment and ordination process in this diocese.

Bishop's Chaplain—A deacon, lay eucharistic minister, acolyte, or priest can easily be assigned by you to help me juggle the miter, crosier, and my prayer book & hymnal. This person can also serve as Greeter & Helper (below)

Greeter & Helper— it's helpful to have an adult or senior high teen who greets the bishop and helps to carry things into the church. Setting up the crosier and getting the vestments organized isn't an onerous task, but the bishop would rather visit with people. This person has the advantage of knowing your space. The Bishop's chaplain can serve in this capacity, however, in many of our congregations separating the roles, and recruiting a second person, is an occasion for you to connect pastorally with somebody whose leadership you want to foster.

- The bishop prefers to conclude all rehearsal-related conversations, including conversation with confirmands, at least 15 minutes before the liturgy. This is especially important if those conversations occur in the space where we'll celebrate the Holy Eucharist.

- Liturgical leadership and teaching: if there are a liturgical change you would like to introduce, discuss whether and how the bishop might be helpful to you.

- The bishop follows local custom about photography during the liturgy. The bishop can be available for photos after the service; please ask someone to be the organizer of photography. After the service, please send several photographs of your choosing to Lauralee for possible inclusion in our electronic portfolio.

Confirmation

Celebrating the Rite(s) of Confirmation in regional gatherings, especially during the Great 50 Days of Easter, is a strong preference. When we gather regionally, candidates have the opportunity to be part of a larger community of faith, and importantly, such liturgies give us a primary focus that's not possible to uphold when Confirmation is integrated with an episcopal visitation. If you would like to host a regional Confirmation, please contact Lauralee Raymond.

If Confirmation/Reception/Reaffirmation will occur during an episcopal visitation, please refer to the separate document "Notes about Confirmation" and use the electronic form indicated on the Visitation Worksheet to record the Official Acts.

After the Liturgy

- The bishop prefers to visit with people, rather than to eat, so a stand-up reception or coffee house where he can answer questions works best. If a sit-down event is better for your context, let's discuss how best to facilitate the conversation.

- Please decide whether you want the bishop to greet the worshiping assembly at the back of the church or go directly to the coffee hour. It's not necessary to wait for the bishop before eating.

- Alcohol during an episcopal visitation is inappropriate. For evening social events alcohol can be served, along with an equally attractive and accessible alternative, but please schedule a time for us to have a conversation about this decision; it really should be exceptional. We adhere to the diocesan policy regarding alcohol (attached at the end of this document).

- Conversation with the Vestry or Bishop's Committee is a requirement of every episcopal visitation. Please refer to the document "Notes for Vestry Visit." Usually, an hour is sufficient. However, if the bishop arrives the evening before, he is happy to meet with the vestry and/or congregational leadership over a simple or potluck supper, followed by Compline.

➢ The bishop is happy to make pastoral calls; this is especially suitable for the times when he is with you for the entire weekend.

Practical Details

- Unless we have made different arrangements please expect the bishop to arrive between 30 and 45 minutes beforehand.

- Please let the bishop know what title to use when he addresses you in public. To address him formally please say "Bishop Brown."

- An important part of the visitation is spending time with clergy and their family. The bishop enjoys hosting you and your spouse or partner to lunch. If that is not possible on the day of the visitation please arrange an alternate time. Please note your preference on the Planning Worksheet.

- The offering to the Bishop s Discretionary Fund (BDF) is made up of the loose offering and any other donations designated to BDF". The BDF meets a number of urgent pastoral needs throughout our diocese and is always in need of support. If helpful, the bishop is happy to talk with the congregations about the kinds of needs that BDF supports. Here are a few details:

  - It's helpful to advise the congregation about this offering several weeks in advance of the visit so they know what to expect and can be prepared.
  - Personal checks should be made payable to the church (not to the diocese or to the bishop) and labeled BDF" in the memo line.
  - The bishop makes a personal contribution to your church; please don't include this in your parish's contribution to the Bishop's Discretionary Fund.
  - Please combine all cash and check donations into one check from your church, made payable to the Diocese of Maine, with BDF" written in the memo line and mail to:

    The Episcopal Diocese of Maine
    Attn: Lauralee Raymond
    PO Box 4036
    Portland, ME 04101

Alcohol Policy of the Diocese of Maine